

Co-operative movement in the State.

Mr. K. T. Mathew.—Sir, my resolution runs thus:—*“This Council requests the Government to make early arrangement with Sir G. K. Devadhar of the Servants of India Society or any other expert on Co-operative movement to enquire into and report on the Co-operative movement in the State with a view to make it more popular and useful”*.

In commending this resolution for the acceptance of the House, let me first of all point out, Sir, that the services of Sir G. K. Devadhar is available if we want it. He is making an enquiry in Travancore. He visited Travancore and prepared a set of questionnaire and I think he has sent a copy of it to our Government or to our Registrar of Co-operative Societies. He is the President of a Society, a well known Society, which is working for the good of the people of India. He was once in this State and had something to do with our Co-operative movement. As to his ability to enquiring into this matter and make a useful report, it is superfluous to say anything. As he has undertaken an enquiry in Travancore, we shall also request him to do the same in our State.

The next question to be considered is whether it is necessary, in view of the development of the Co-operative societies in our State, to make an enquiry now. In answer to this I have only to refer to the statement of objects and reasons of the Co-operative Societies Regulation Amendment Bill introduced the other day. In reading the statement of objects and reasons of that Bill, I find that the Government have in view only the benefit of the agriculturists in the State. The Co-operative movement should not be confined to the agriculturists in the State alone. To read the statement of objects and reasons,—“Since then the progress and development of the Co-operative movement in the State has been steady with benefit to the agriculturists”. I ask the Government whether they have forgotten the existence of other people in the State, who require very well the benefits derivable from the Co-operative movement. Although the Government have stated that the agriculturists were enjoying and appreciating the benefits of Co-operative movement, I should say that this is not a true statement. Only one side of our Co-operative movement is developing from year to year, that is, credit societies. Very recently there was a speech—a very well thought out speech—by Mr. Strathie on co-operation. I believe the Government have read it. In the course of his speech he had pointed out some of the serious defects under which the Co-operative movement is labouring; and in pointing out the brighter side of the Co-operative movement he says thus.—

first place, there are some excellent societies run on model lines and doing immense good. These societies are working on their own capital, catering in a quiet way for the credit needs of their members, enabling them to buy new bulls, set up little shops, digging wells and helping to keep the village clean".

I ask the Government how many of the Co-operative societies in our State are doing such work.

Secondly he says:—"I think it must be admitted that the Co-operative movement has been one factor in reducing the rates of interest throughout the Presidency".

Thirdly he adds:—"there can be little doubt that the movement has encouraged the investment habit among the middle classes".

He says lastly that—"the movement with all its imperfections has done a great deal to break down caste barriers and bring out the essential worth of man as man. In this direction very definite traditions were established by the early Registrars and they have been adhered to with loyalty. As Registrar of Co-operative Societies I have constantly found members of all castes and communities sitting together and having tea together in the same room. It is a fact that in the Co-operative movement there is little caste distinction. The lamp has been kept burning and the traditions of the Co-operative societies have gradually spread throughout the Districts. The extent to which conditions in the villages have changed is indeed remarkable and I have no doubt at all that the Co-operative movement has been one of the chief influences in this great social amelioration".

That is one of the most important aspects of the Co-operative movement. I do not think that all these aspects are being attended to by the Co-operative societies in our State.

In the resolution I have stated that if the Government are not willing to avail of the opportunity now presented itself of securing the services of Sir G. K. Devadhar, the Government should as well employ any other expert on Co-operative movement. But I may point out to the Government that it is not easy to get another expert without paying a fat salary. Sir G. K. Devadhar is one who is devoting his life for the cause of the people of India and I need not say anything about the Servants of India Society, for, all of you are aware of its activities.

In conclusion I earnestly request the Government to accept the resolution.

Mr. A. Sankara Poduval.—I have very great pleasure in seconding this resolution. The Co-operative movement was introduced in Cochin by Regulation IV of 1088, and it is very unfortunate that in spite of a lot of money spent upon it by the Government, co-operation has made very little progress in the State. In the very first year of this Council I had the privilege of moving for a grant of Rs. 5,000 to start an Institute and the House passed the grant and Government generously sanctioned the amount. But in spite of the labour of the Institute it has not been possible to develop co-operation in the various phases

of its activities. I find that the failure of this important organisation was due to the lack of a master-mind to guide its various activities. This resolution recommends that Sir, Devadhar be requested to guide us in this matter. We want an expert to guide us and this gentleman is a person who has been taking an abiding interest in this work and who has been guiding the Co-operative movement in various States and who is available at a very little cost. It is in these circumstances that we suggest that either this gentleman or any other expert should be deputed for the purpose of carrying on the work referred to in this resolution and that work will mainly consist in exploring the various phases of Co-operative work in the State, how the Department could be developed and how the masses could be made to co-operate. Credit societies (the banks), are the only Co-operative societies worth naming here. Various experiments have been tried in other branches of co-operation with very little success. The Co-operative movement appears to be the best panacea for the betterment of the masses. I have been speaking about this subject times without number in this Council. We have tried to impress upon Government that the propaganda work carried on in this direction has been negligible. We have to get the masses realise the importance of this movement. It is absolutely non-communal, it tends to promote thrift and self-reliance. We in Cochin, with a very high percentage of literacy, have more facilities than other States to push on with the work. We are still where we were a few years ago.

When men of capacity are available in the State, why is it that the Co-operative movement is not progressing as fast as it should? That is the problem and for the solution of this problem it is very essential that a master-mind should explore the feasibilities of the movement, and guide us. It is for these reasons that we press the motion.

Mr. A. Eachara Menon.—I also support the motion. I say that all the Co-operative societies in the State are no more than Hundi shops. It was only from the preamble of the Bill that I knew that it had been of very great help to the agriculturists. I am sure it is not borne out by facts. It has been put there by the Law Member at the instance of the Head of the Department. How this Co-operative department has been a failure in the State, we should consider. It is due to the want of a proper man as the Head of the Department. If unctuous responsibility and assumption of superiority is the qualification to be a Head of the Department, we have enough of that in the present man. But Sir, a perusal of Mr. Virkey's petitions to

the Diwan will clearly prove that there had been very many mistakes which have been brought to the notice of the Head of the Department, and which still remain uncorrected. To give an example, in Chittur itself very lately about Rs. 10,000 has been written off and another Rs. 6,000 is proposed to be written off very soon and it is before the Government. So I think a proper man should be appointed to see that the Co-operative department is put in order.

Mr. Joseph Pettah.—Let us have the Government view.

Rama Varmha Tampuran.—Sir, Government do concede that the movement requires a great deal of improvement in this State as well. I do not think that we are any the worse off than the other parts of India.

Mr. A. Sankara Poduval.—That is no consolation.

Rama Varmha Tampuran.—I am coming to that. But all the same, just as in other parts of India, it does require improvement especially in the starting of other kinds of societies than the ordinary credit societies. Supply generally follows demand or the demand precedes supply. In India the condition is such that the demand is always for credit societies and that is one of the reasons why credit societies have always increased in numbers. That itself is not anything very deplorable. It meets a real situation and a real demand. Money is scarce. The agriculturist requires money at the timely seasons and when there is an impartial body who will advance money at reasonable rate of interest, it is no wonder that such societies are encouraged and do grow. That by itself is not deplorable. It will of course be equally nice if we have developments in the other lines too. Therefore there is nothing particularly bad about the movement in the State but at the same time Government do admit it can have improvements in other directions as well. Now the improvement that it can have is not due to the want of any academic knowledge of the subject.

Mr. Joseph Pettah.—Certainly not.

Rama Varmha Tampuran.—The real difficulty is that the people have not taken any interest in the other departments of its possible developments. Just as in the case of so many other features of our national life, such as, want of large sized industries, want of large scale agricultural farms and want of so many other things, there is also the want of development of the Co-operative movement in other lines than on purely credit lines. The disease is deep-rooted so to say. It is not due to any superficial reason which could be rooted out in a day or two. It will take time. Therefore I do not know what great good would come

by any expert examination at this stage. More than that, in Travancore a Committee has been appointed to co-operate and work with Mr. Devadhar. A mere casual visit of this eminent co-operator to our State to interview a dozen or two dozen important people interested in the movement will not improve the situation. If anything has to be done we have also to appoint a Committee. A mere casual visit, as it is proposed in this resolution, will not, I say, in any way improve the situation. The situation will not improve by it a bit. Then the question is, where the money for all this should be found out and whether it is really necessary to spend all this money. Travancore is exactly similar to Cochin in the matter of the several professions that the people follow and the various other cognate factors relative to this work. And now that we will get a detailed report about the movement in Travancore, why should that be repeated in Cochin? Look at it from that impartial aspect. If it were a report on a District in Bellary or Cudappa or in Ganjam or somewhere in Behar or Orissa or in the Punjab, the situation will be different. But Travancore and Cochin, except for its political boundary, are exactly similar and they are going to prepare an exhaustive report which we can read as well.

Mr. Joseph Pettah.—Does this argument hold good in the case of the Economic Survey?

Rama Varmha Tampuran.—I do not think that they are going to conduct any economic survey.

Mr. Joseph Pettah.—But they have got an unemployment survey.

Rama Varmha Tampuran.—That is quite a different thing.

We can have a duplication of what is going on there but no additional benefit will be gained thereby. When a person looks at it quite impartially it comes to that. A mere casual visit and a talk with half a dozen or two dozen eminent co-operators of the State will not meet the situation. Whatever detailed knowledge we want, we can get from the report that Travancore is going to publish. We get all the benefit we want without conducting a survey. There is nothing wrong in following their report. Therefore, for these reasons, the Government think that an expert examination of the movement at this stage is not necessary. It is not due to want of appreciation of the defects of the movement.

Mr. Joseph Pettah.—I beg to support the resolution. The Co-operative movement here in Cochin is now 20 years old and it is only reasonable to suppose that after a growth of 20 years we might have a look into how matters are proceeding.

In British India the movement is a little older but there we find so many enquiries have been held up till now. In the first instance, they had a very famous Committee, the MacLagan Committee, appointed to enquire into the actual working of the Co-operative movement and it was on the report of that Committee that they made certain modifications in the Co-operative Act there. Again there was the Royal Agricultural Commission which also enquired into the actual working of the Co-operative movement. Again in the Madras Presidency, a couple of years ago, there was an enquiry. Similarly in many other provinces in British India there have been enquiries. They have felt the necessity, though the conditions are more or less the same between one province and another, to have separate enquiries.

Again now at this particular stage when a Bill is contemplated by the Government improving upon the old Bill, there is the very great necessity that you should explore the grounds already covered. We must collect actual facts of experience so far gained, before we venture upon any further legislation. That some legislation is necessary and that the movement is not going on as it ought to be, has been admitted by the Government side itself. The objects of the movement are very laudable, very salutary, and they have been realised in various degrees in various countries. The encouragement of self-help, the encouragement of industry, the removal of indebtedness and such other things have been the various objects connected with the movement. How far they have reached the stage is a matter worth looking into.

Now the Hon'ble the Secretary to the Diwan have been pleased to say that our conditions are not in any way worse than those prevalent outside. This is a very poor consolation. We are leading in various other matters. Cochin is a compact area having very many facilities which the Madras Presidency has not got and, perhaps, no other province of British India has not. In such a compact area, with such a high degree of literacy and also with the economic facilities we have, we must set an example in the field of co-operation as well. Therefore if we take consolation in the fact that the conditions here are not worse than the conditions outside, that itself is a high condemnation on the movement here because, in view of the special facilities we have, we could have had a much better movement or produced much better results.

Again the Hon'ble Secretary has pointed out as a serious defect that the credit movement is the only one that is developed here. I think that even with regard to the credit societies, they are not working properly. Let go the other fact that we have not

got non-credit societies. Are we having the credit societies on right lines? It is a pitiable and very sad thing that very many, if not the majority of these societies, are working very improperly.

Deputy President.—Let us now adjourn. Mr. Pettah will finish his speech to-morrow.

The House rose for the day at 5 p. m.

C. J. MATHEW,

Secretary to the Council.